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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MINSK 000145

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [BO](#)

SUBJECT: IRINA KOZULINA RESTS IN PEACE, LUKASHENKO WORRIES

REF: A. MINSK 050

[1](#)B. MINSK 143

Classified By: Ambassador Karen Stewart for reason 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Overflow crowds packed the February 26 and 27 funeral services for Irina Kozulina held in downtown Minsk. Opposition figures and Minsk residents both paid their respects to her and took the opportunity to express their support to her political prisoner husband Aleksandr, who had been furloughed to take part in the services (ref B). Though Lukashenko can not be pleased by such an outpouring of support for an erstwhile rival, his public statements seem to hint that he is at least considering Kozulin's release. End summary.

Hundreds Pay Last Respects at Wake

[1](#)2. (C) A wake for Irina Kozulina that started at 8 p.m. February 26 at Minsk's Sts. Simeon and Helen Catholic Church drew an overflow crowd of over 1,000 mourners. Poloffs witnessed many EU Heads of Mission, including those of Germany, Slovakia, Latvia and Sweden and most major opposition figures were present. In the main, though, the bulk of the crowd appeared to be composed of average Minsk residents. When Ambassador and A/DCM arrived at 9 p.m. there were still long lines waiting to pay their respects. Police presence was not visible, although independent media reported police vehicles were stationed out of sight a couple blocks away.

Regime Restricts Funeral Location and Attendees

[1](#)3. (C) The Kozulin family requested a burial plot in Minsk's best-known cemetery, Eastern Cemetery, also known as Moscow Cemetery. Authorities denied the request for as yet unclear reasons and instead offered the family plots in two other cemeteries. The family settled on Tarasovo Cemetery, outside of Minsk city limits, about 30 minutes from the center of town.

[1](#)4. (C) Regime daily "Soviyetskaya Belorussiya" included a front-page announcement of the Kozulina funeral and roughly 1,000 people attended the noon funeral mass. In at least two cases, however, authorities denied requests to travel to Minsk for the event under the pretext that funerals are family affairs. EUR DAS David Kramer requested a visa to attend, but received a visa valid only starting March 3. An MFA Spokesman cynically or ignorantly told reporters Kramer had been issued a visa but he did not know whether Kramer

would attend the funeral, adding "personally, I think funerals are family affairs." Former political prisoner Nikolay Avtukhovich (ref A) was denied permission to skip his daily report to his local police station in order to travel to Minsk for the funeral.

Kozulin Euologizes Wife at Graveside Service

15. (SBU) Roughly 800 mourners gathered following the funeral for Irina Kozulina's interment at Tarasovo Cemetery, including leaders of all the main parties and movements in Belarus' United Democratic Forces. When family members were invited to say a few words during the service, Aleksandr Kozulin was the only speaker. Kozulin's remarks were both measured and respectful. He thanked his late wife for all she had sacrificed for him, telling the assembled mourners that she offered an example of how to live and how to die, with love and in freedom.

Comment: Opposition Inspired, Lukashenko Worried

16. (C) Although Kozulina's wake and funeral were entirely in keeping with religious traditions, because of the nature of the Kozulins politics was undoubtedly on the minds of many attendees. Almost as if Kozulina's death spurred them to push harder for democracy, contacts mentioned more mundane topics such as upcoming lectures and Democracy Commission grants. Former Prime Minister Chigir and Kozulin's predecessor as rector of Belarus State University, Anatoliy Pavlov, told Acting Pol/Econ Chief that even more international pressure was needed on Aleksandr Lukashenko.

MINSK 00000145 002 OF 002

17. (C) One of the keys to Lukashenko's political dominance has been his success at crushing opponents who begin to gain prominence. He cannot feel comfortable with one of his most prominent critics receiving huge crowds of sympathizers. In forcing Kozulin to choose between exile or staying in prison while his beloved wife died, Lukashenko, usually a master politician, has turned a third place candidate with limited public support into the potential moral standard of Belarus.

18. (C) Lukashenko has wisely kept quiet on the Kozulins since Irina's death. Kozulin may expect irrational action from the dictator (ref B), but he appears hard at thought. His comments on February 26 that "we conducted and conduct a careful, balanced foreign policy, and if we somewhere compromise, as recently with the European Union, then I wouldn't say, that we changed the direction of our foreign policy ..." could signal he is considering the release of Kozulin to attempt dialogue with the West.

STEWART